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FOCUS

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Risk of AIDS is Spreading

Disease Control Tied to Behavior Changes

'86 Tax Reform May Hurt Minority Firms

Changes Still Possible

A Prescription For Better Health Care

Education Helps, As Does More Doctors

Political TrendLetter

Baltimore Mayoral Race; Education Budget Proposals; "Mega-Tuesday"; Talks with Japanese; Across the Nation

Perspective

What If Martin Luther King Were Alive Today?

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What If Martin Luther King Were Alive Today?

The coupling of Martin Luther King's official birthday in January and Black History Month in February should encourage us to begin every year with the right blend of inspiration and historical insight. For me, the chance to do so came when I addressed the congregation at the annual Martin Luther King memorial service of the Church of the Redeemer in Washington, D.C. The theme I chose, which was suggested by Dr. Clayborne Carson's article in last month's *Focus*, was what Dr. King would say if he were alive today.

I think Dr. King would make more Americans aware of the link between social justice and national survival. He tried to do that in the sixties when he warned that "injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere" and that "we are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality tied in a single garment of destiny." His warning still rings true today. The difference, though, is that the issue today is not only justice but economic progress for the nation as a whole. Since so many people understand money better than they do morality, perhaps they would listen to Dr. King today.

Dr. King would indict the continuing racism in America, but he would also challenge our policymakers to squarely confront the phenomenon of structural discrimination. This happens when you can't get a good job because you don't have a good education because you lived in a poor neighborhood because your family didn't earn enough money to do any better.

Just as he once dreamed of blacks and whites sitting down together at the table of brotherhood, Dr. King's call today would be for blacks and whites to sit down together at the table where public policies are made. He would be quick to point out that the prospects for reaching consensus on some major policy issues are much improved today. He might cite, for example, the results of the Joint Center/Gallup survey which shows that the views of blacks and whites have become remarkably similar on several crucial issues. (See the October *Focus* for the survey findings.) Noting the convergence on the issues, King would challenge the entire nation—blacks and whites, the public sector and the private sector—to sit down together and develop an agenda for the common good.

Dr. King would also no doubt challenge us "to rise to the level of self-criticism," a message that may cause some of us to say, "Wait a minute, Doc, you've stopped preaching and gone to meddling." What would we say if he asked if it isn't hypocritical for us to advocate national programs for black businesses and for the survival of black colleges and yet fail to ourselves support these enterprises? Mightn't he point out that it is odd for us to indict white folks for perpetuating poor education for our children, when in fact black officials are increasingly in charge of the urban school systems where most of our children go to school?

Dr. King would admonish us that we must confront these challenges ourselves, even as we demand that the government and business sectors produce enough jobs so we can sustain ourselves economically and maintain our human dignity.

Yes, Dr. King would have a lot to say to black and white Americans.... But, Dr. King is not here. He's not coming back. There's just you and me. I guess it's up to us. Let us go on with the struggle. ■

PRESIDENT

FOCUS

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A Prescription For Better Health Care

Education Helps, As Does More Doctors

by Curtis Patton

Popular wisdom holds that the poor get sick and the sick get poorer and that health is a factor of wealth. This view finds support in the tragic gap in health status so very apparent between black and white America. (See box for details.) Poverty, it is true, plagues our community, but I don't see any national outcry in our favor on the issue of sharing the wealth.

The good news is that in spite of everything we still live and contribute in countless ways to the health and vitality of our nation. All is not gloomy and, in spite of enormous stress, some of us are healthy and strong and live so long that we are a mystery to public health workers. In fact, some of us with good standards of public health and medical care may find it hard to realize the impact of disease in our community.

Certainly, we need more information about health problems and risk factors confronted by blacks; we need to reduce both. We also need to examine very carefully those positive factors in our communities associated with good health. Those communities and families with low personal incomes where we see low child mortality and high life expectancy ought to provide interesting models. We must examine how some of us, indeed most of us, probably, have broken the connection between wealth and health.

Importance of Education

Health experts have observed the importance of education and literacy in successful health programs in societies (e.g., Sri Lanka, the state of Kerala in India, Peoples Republic of China, Costa Rica) with low personal incomes. The mere fact of going to school and getting an education may be more important than what is taught about health or other subjects. The explanation is that education brings with it a new culture and awareness: the educated are more aggressive towards health and governmental bureaucracies, they insist that doctors and nurses give their children the best medical care, and they influence society to focus

(Continued on page 4)

Dr. Patton teaches at the Department of Epidemiology and Public Health, Yale University School of Medicine. This article is adapted from a speech Dr. Patton made on October 1, 1986, to the Health Braintrust of the Congressional Black Caucus. The text of the speech is copyrighted by the American Lung Association.

Selected Statistics on the Health Status of Blacks

Life expectancy: At the turn of the century, life expectancy at birth for whites was 47 years, but only 33 years for blacks. By the 1980s, improvements in sanitation, control of infectious diseases, and better nutrition and education had pushed longevity to greater than 71 years for white males and 78 years for white females. For blacks, however, life expectancy is still at the level it was for whites in the 1950s: 64 years for black males and 74 years for black females.

Infant Mortality. In 1960, the infant mortality rate for whites was 22.9 deaths for every 1000 births; for blacks, it was 44.3 deaths for every 1000 births. In the 1980s, the infant mortality rate is lower, but still twice as high for blacks: 10.5 for whites and 20.0 for blacks. The rate for blacks matches the rate of 20 years ago for whites, and is among the highest in Western nations.

Excess Deaths. The term is defined as the difference between actual deaths and expected deaths, if the black population had the same age- and sex-specific death rates as the white population. In August 1985, a task force of the Department of Health and Human Services estimated that excess deaths for blacks were almost 50,000 per year. Heart disease and stroke, homicides and accidents, cancer, infant mortality, cirrhosis (chemical dependency), and diabetes account for more than 80 percent of the excess deaths in the black community. Excess deaths account for 47 percent of the total annual deaths of those 45 and under, and 42 percent of those under 70.

Better Health Care

(Continued from page 3)

on the future of children. Education, it seems, gives people a sense of self-control and self-reliance on health matters that is difficult to reverse even under the most stressful conditions.

In the South, where 53 percent of the black population lives, only 3 percent of the doctors are black.

One of the best illustrations of this point is the work of my colleague, Dr. James Comer, a professor of psychiatry at Yale. Dr. Comer's objective was to raise the academic achievement of black students in two public schools in a poor New Haven community, but along with the dramatic scholastic successes came self-discovery, newfound talents, and increased self-respect for the students and their families—and improvement in the overall health status of the community.

More Doctors Needed

Even more basic than education, however, is the need for more doctors and doctors who are better informed about the health risks blacks face.

Black communities throughout the nation are woefully underserved by the health care profession. In 1984, only 5 percent of U.S. medical school graduates were black—and the numbers have declined since then. In the South, where 53 percent of the black population lives, only 3 percent of the doctors are black. In academia and research, the underrepresentation of blacks is just as startling: only 2.7 percent of the nation's 31,000 medical school faculty are black, and six university teaching hospitals have no black physicians on their house staffs.

Perhaps because of the shortage of black doctors, black people are not well informed on some key health issues. Studies indicate that blacks appear to underestimate the prevalence of cancer, seem not to know or believe the warning signs, get fewer screening tests, and are diagnosed at later stages of the disease than whites. In one study in New York, only 9 percent of those doctors who have black patients were found to recommend or do screening for cancer of the breast, cervix, prostate, etc. Many professionals and lay people, black and white, seem not to know that heart disease is as common in black men as in white men and that black women die from heart disease at higher rates than white women. Clearly, our community is not being well served, and we must muster the necessary community will to ensure better access to basic health care.

Monitoring Progress

Finally, I believe we need an organization (which is more than simply a task force) to generate and collect data and draw appropriate inferences, to deliberate on and develop thoughtful and sound approaches to reducing health risk factors, to work with community groups, and to monitor the impact of public policy on the health status of blacks. Besides measuring our progress, such an organization could steer policy-makers away from fearful solutions such as the proposals to confine AIDS victims and presumed carriers of the AIDS virus, to examine citizens generally for evidence that they have taken illegal drugs, and to punish in sundry ways those who become pregnant against their own or societal wishes.

Taking Charge

Some of mankind's most fantastic dreams have gained consistency and become real in this century. New perspectives have made us bold and willing to approach goals that not too long ago appeared only imaginary. Medicine is among the great beneficiaries of 20th century advancement. Yet, it is still a legitimate question to try to understand why, in spite of unprecedented explosions in scientific knowledge, in spite of spectacular achievements in medicine and technology, in spite of extraordinary capacity to exquisitely diagnose, treat, and control if not cure so very many diseases, black people have not benefited from these advances.

Education gives people a sense of self-control and self-reliance on health matters that is difficult to reverse...

As we approach this task, we may find it less useful to blame and suspect sinister conspiracies than to ask what is working well for the good of our people and our communities. Where we find things working well, we should proceed with great vigor; where intelligence suggests action, we should take action joyfully; and, where questions are not clearly formed and approaches seem faulty, we should be brave and take some calculated risks. We should examine and reexamine problems until they make more and more sense, leading us to turn to new solutions rather than to rehash failed strategies. To borrow the words of Sherlock Holmes, "There should be no combination of events for which the wit of mankind cannot conceive an explanation." ■

February 1987

JCPS

POLITICAL TRENDLETTER

Inside This Issue

- **Baltimore's majority-black population may split it's vote between two black candidates, thereby helping to elect the third major candidate—a former Carter administration housing expert.**
- **Education Secretary William Bennett's call for a 28 percent cut in education spending is not popular with the Democratic-controlled 100th Congress.**
- **Jesse Jackson's presidential prospects may be aided by "Mega-Tuesday"—when 13 southern states will hold their primary on the same day.**
- **A coalition of prominent black civil rights and business leaders has called for negotiations with Prime Minister Nakasone to increase Japanese support for black businesses, colleges, and communities.**
- **Across the nation: a tight primary race has developed between Chicago Mayor Harold Washington and challenger Jane Byrne; Louisiana elects three black "firsts," two mayors and a chief of police; the NAACP puts pressure on North Carolina to replace its at-large elections; and *TL* offers a Black History Month tribute to a political family from Rankin, Pa.**

Taking Sides in the Baltimore Mayoral Race

The two leading black candidates in the mayoral race in Baltimore, Mayor CLARENCE (DU) BURNS and State's Attorney KURT SCHMOKE, are as different as East and West—that is, the low-income East Baltimore and the upscale West Baltimore. **The sharp differences in their ages, educational backgrounds, and political allegiances may lead black Baltimoreans (55 percent of the city's population) to split their votes between the two**—as the East side and the West side have done in prior elections involving two black candidates—**and the result could be to enhance the chances of the other major candidate, ROBERT EMBRY,** a housing expert who was assistant secretary of HUD in the Carter administration and served as director of Housing in Baltimore.... Burns, 68, is a high school graduate who worked for 22 years in the locker room of Dunbar High School, and rose to his current post after many years as former Mayor DONALD SCHAEFER'S most dependable political operative. While Burns' political base, and his home, is in East Baltimore, Schmoke, 37, is a former college quarterback, Rhodes Scholar, and Harvard trained lawyer who served on President Carter's White House Domestic Policy Council. He is expected to do well among West Baltimore's upscale black community, younger white professionals, and liberal political activists who supported Attorney General STEVEN SACHS in the gubernatorial race last year.... **Burns became Baltimore's first black mayor on January 21st through automatic elevation from his prior position as city council president, when he succeeded Mayor Schaefer,** who was sworn in as governor of Maryland. Burns had served on the city council since 1971 and became well-known for delivering city services to his constituents. **In his first test as the new mayor, Burns gained high praise for managing the city's response to the massive snowstorm that struck the East Coast in late January....** Seeking to be more than an interim mayor, **Burns, like many first-time black mayoral candidates, is promising to keep Baltimore "one city" and to "be a mayor for all the people." What will he do for the city's low-income and minority populations? In a virtually unique stance for a first-time black mayor, Burns is promising that his city will not change. Instead, he has promised to carry on the Schaefer tradition and told a *Wall Street Journal* reporter he is not insulted by talk that he is "in Schaefer's hip-pocket" because, "it's a good place to be."... Despite Burns' declaration of loyalty, Schaefer has yet to announce whether he will endorse Burns or Embry, who is also a long-time Schaefer ally.** Schmoke cannot expect Schaefer's nod: he has

never been part of Schaefer's ole boy network and supported his gubernatorial primary opponent last year. But both Embry and Burns are close to Governor Schaefer. **Most observers believe Schaefer will remain officially neutral but will actively support Embry. Indeed, some speculate that Schaefer is encouraging Embry to run since he fears that Burns cannot defeat Schmoke in a one-on-one race.** These analysts note that Embry's braintrust is made up of the same large developers and fundraisers who backed Schaefer in his race for governor. For Schaefer, whose first love is Baltimore and who may have to take on a somewhat hostile legislature, this is a win-win situation: Put his white pal in the mayor's seat and keep his black pal as chairman of the city council.

Bennett's Budget Blasted by Congress and Mayors

Secretary of Education WILLIAM J. BENNETT had the unenviable task of telling the Democratic-controlled 100th Congress that his FY 1988 budget would call for cuts in education spending —by $5.5 billion, or 28 percent less than the appropriation for the previous year. In testimony to the Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee, now headed by liberal Edward M. Kennedy (D-Mass.), Bennett called it "a tough, lean budget." He said, "it is...a responsible budget in terms of what the Treasury can afford, and a responsible budget for American education..." **But he found no support,** even among Republicans like Senator PETE DOMENICI (N.M.) who said, "You can't be serious about this budget."... **The largest chunk of the proposed spending cuts—$3.7 billion—would come from college-level student aid programs.** Bennett favors shifting student aid from grants to loans; in his view, students are the primary beneficiaries of higher education and, thus, should bear the primary burden of financing their schooling. Several senators disagreed with this view by noting their perception that American society benefited from having an educated citizenry; thus, they said, the federal government should be willing to bear a greater share of education costs.... **The irony of Bennett's scaled-down budget request is that President REAGAN has singled out education as the central pillar of his strategy to improve America's competitiveness in the world economy. The Reagan plan—"a quest for excellence"—however, envisions that funds for this effort will come from state, local, and family resources—not the federal government. Despite the administration's view, Congress is sure to increase education funding this session.** As Senator ROBERT STAFFORD (R-Vt.) publicly assured two representatives of teacher unions, "The money will be there."

Meanwhile, Bennett's undersecretary of education, GARY L. BAUER—who has since moved to the White House as a domestic policy advisor—was fighting battles of his own at the U.S. Conference of Mayors. For example, when Hartford, Conn., Mayor THIRMAN L. MILNER (who is black) suggested that the administration should cut the defense budget rather than cutting $100 million from appropriations for drug-abuse education programs, Bauer shocked not only Milner but other big-city mayors by telling them "don't sit in your cities and tell us what our budget should be," and by accusing Milner of "Pentagon-bashing." **All in all, however, the U.S. Conference of Mayor's meeting in January was one of the least pessimistic since Reagan was elected in 1980. It might even be described as "upbeat." The reasons are simple: The mayors know that all of the president's prior budget proposals have been fundamentally revised by Congress and that key members of Congress have already labelled this one as "totally unrealistic" and "dead on arrival."** The conditions for substantial revision are very good since Democrats control both houses of Congress, Reagan is severely weakened politically as a result of the Irangate-Contra debacle, and it is less than two years away from the next presidential election. In short, Congress is left to write its own proposal.... One can be sure that the Democrats will seek to pass a budget which serves their immediate political interests. Such a budget is likely to be far more kind to the cities than any prior budget in the Reagan era.

"Mega-Tuesday '88": Primary Schedule May Benefit Jesse Jackson

To no avail in 1984, JESSE JACKSON complained that the Democratic Party's rules unfairly denied him his fair share of delegates to the nominating convention. The Fairness Commission that was created to hear his claims did recommend some changes but not the ones Jackson sought: the caucus system will not be abolished, the number of "superdelegates" (unpledged party and

elected officials) has been increased by 75, the threshold of eligibility for delegates was cut to 15 percent of the vote—not eliminated, and there will not be an "assured percentage" (affirmative action) of minority delegates. **Though he was rebuffed on the rules changes, Jackson could be the big beneficiary of another key change in the 1988 primaries: the scheduling of primaries in 13 states, all in the South, on a single day—March 8. At stake are 2,097 delegates—more than half the total of 4,158.**

The good news for Jackson is that he fared well in most of the "Mega-Tuesday" states in 1984: he won 43 percent of the vote in Louisiana, 26 percent of the vote in Maryland, 25 percent of the vote in both Tennessee and North Carolina, 21 percent of the vote in Georgia, 20 percent of the vote in Alabama, and 12 percent of the vote in Florida. In the remaining states, which held caucuses in 1984, Jackson won 27 percent of the vote in Mississippi, 26 percent in Virginia, 19 percent in Kentucky, 18 percent in Missouri, 17 percent in Texas, but only 4 percent in Oklahoma. In general, it is easy to see that Jackson's overall vote percentages in these states roughly followed the proportionate size of the black electorates of these states.

Thus, it appears that a rainbow candidate has much to gain and little to lose by the frontloading of primaries on Mega-Tuesday. Some qualifications, however, must be noted. If many candidates are in the race and the vote is heavily split, Jackson could run exceptionally well in these primaries even if he got no more of the vote than he did in 1984. However, if the field of Democratic candidates shrinks after the earlier Iowa caucus and New Hampshire primary, Jackson's seeming advantage would be reduced as he goes head-to-head against one or two rivals.

In sum, the Mega-Tuesday primaries will probably not make Jackson a frontrunner but they do improve his chances to have stronger influence at the Democratic convention by providing him more delegate strength earlier in the game. **If Jackson wins big on March 8, the result will be greater coverage in the media, greater credibility for his candidacy, and the potential for a snowball effect as he goes into the next round of primaries in the midwest.**

Racial Insult Spurs A Yen For Talks With Japanese

In late September 1986 Japanese Prime Minister YASUHIRO NAKASONE insulted blacks and other minorities in a statement before his Liberal Democratic Party. Nakasone said, "Japan is now a highly educated and fairly intelligent society. Much more so than America, on the average. In America, there are quite a few black people, Puerto Ricans, and Mexicans. On the average, it is still very low." **Although Nakasone's slur should have offended all Americans, the Reagan administration and most other government officials had "no comment." Blacks and other minorities, however, were outraged. After criticisms by numerous black leaders, Nakasone apologized for his racist remarks.**

That, however, may not end the matter. A full-page ad carried a message from more than 45 prominent black Americans denouncing Nakasone's portrayal of blacks and calling for "reciprocity" from Japanese business. One of the leaders of the ad-hoc coalition is Rev. JOSEPH LOWERY, head of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC). In an interview with ***TrendLetter***, **Lowery said that the movement for economic reciprocity is part of the SCLC's planned Poor People's Crusade. Noting that poverty is international, Lowery added that "foreign investment has contributed to divestment in this country, resulting in the movement of jobs abroad and unemployment, underemployment, and poverty at home.** Thus, the focus of the Poor People's Crusade must be both domestic and international."

The economic leverage of black consumers—who spend over $7 billion annually on Japanese goods—could be considerable. According to *Black Enterprise*, blacks consume about 10 percent of the Japanese-made appliances (e.g., TVs, cameras, VCRs, microwaves, stereos) that are sold in the U.S.; and, during the last 10 years, bought an estimated 650,000 to 1.2 million Japanese cars. Yet, few benefits have flowed to blacks: for example, no blacks have been given automobile dealerships for Japanese cars.

According to Rev. Lowery, SCLC and other members of the Japanese protest coalition have called for a "real discussion about equitable reinvestment" with Japanese leaders. Lowery said that SCLC is researching the best way to produce a favorable response through negotiation with Japanese leaders. **The goal of the negotiation will be to secure more Japanese investment in black institutions, in black business enterprises, and in the black community in general. If negotiation does not produce a favorable change, confrontation will be the next step.** Lowery concluded that confrontation would take a variety of forms: pray-ins and sit-ins against Japanese products, disassembling Japanese autos in public squares, boycotting Japanese products, etc. Lowery and the coalition are awaiting a response from the Japanese.

Borough Dynasty: The Prices of Rankin, Pa.

As a special tribute this Black History Month, **TrendLetter offers a salute to the members of a remarkable family who rose from humble beginnings to devote their lives to "the needs of others." This family has maintained a 42-year-old tradition of having one of its members elected to the council from the western Pennsylvania borough of Rankin, where blacks came up from the South after World War I to work in the steel mills. The pioneer in this story is WILLIAM H. PRICE, SR., who was known during his political career as a mediator of disputes who could "hammer out a compromise between rival factions."** The young Price showed early signs that he was ready for leadership: his oration to his high school graduating class in 1912, for instance, was loftily titled "The Negro's Opportunity." The text of his speech is unavailable now but Price would find that, other than in the steel mills or in domestic service, opportunities for blacks were extremely limited: for 24 years he served as a chauffeur. In the 1930s, however, Price became a charter member of the Colored Democratic Organization which emerged during FRANKLIN DELANO ROOSEVELT's presidency—and politics thereafter became the dominant interest of the rest of his life. After 22 years of service on the Rankin borough council, William H. Price, Sr., died in office at the age of 81. As his daughter, MAZZETTA PRICE CLANAGAN—who served in the borough council for eight years, told *TrendLetter*: "On November 17, 1969, in the borough of Rankin the flags were at half-mast as a stalwart citizen, a humane gentleman, was buried." Other members of this family to hold office are WILLIAM H. PRICE, JR. (from 1969 to his death in 1976), and WILLIAM H. PRICE III, the present councilman, who succeeded his aunt, Mazzetta.

Across the Nation

ARKANSAS: The Little Rock Board of Directors chose City Director LOTTIE SHACKLEFORD to serve a two-year term as mayor of the city. With this move, **Shackleford became the city's first woman and second black to gain the essentially honorary title.** She is an active member of the National Black Caucus of Local Elected Officials, executive director of the Arkansas Regional Minority Purchasing Council, and first vice-chair of the National Democratic Municipal Officials Conference.

ILLINOIS: In the final weeks before the February 24 Democratic mayoral primary in Chicago, the two leading candidates are still locked in a tight race that may be decided by the city's minority Hispanic population whom both candidates are vigorously courting. A mid-January *Chicago Sun-Times*/ABC News poll showed **former Mayor JANE BYRNE leading Mayor HAROLD WASHINGTON by 44 percent to 43 percent, with voters sharply divided along racial lines.** Sixty-nine percent of whites polled by Gallup supported Byrne and 87 percent of blacks supported Washington. **A mid-February poll by CBS News, however, gives Washington a 47 percent to 36 percent lead. As in the earlier poll, racial polarization was high: 85 percent of blacks favored Washington over Byrne (with 11 percent undecided), and 64 percent of whites favored Byrne over Washington (with 19 percent undecided).** As reported in last month's *TrendLetter*, a December *Chicago Tribune* poll of registered voters showed Washington with a 54-to-38 percent lead over Byrne. . . . **Much of Byrne's rise in the polls can be attributed to her television ad campaign in which she accuses Washington of reducing the size of the police force in the face of rapidly rising crime.** Various analyses, however, have shown that accurate crime statistics are unavailable for the Byrne administration, since the Chicago police department practiced a system of underreporting in her years, and that the number of police has actually risen under the Washington administration.

LOUISIANA: It took Opelousas, the state's third-oldest city, 266 years to elect its first black mayor, 53-year old JOHN W. JOSEPH. Blacks make-up more than 50 percent of Opelousas's population. Joseph, who took office January 2nd, assumes his post at a critical time in the city's history: unnemployment is at an alarming 20 percent and most of the downtown area's major businesses are closing or relocating. A former school teacher and school administrator, Johnson has directed the Chapter I Program (a program to improve education for poor and deprived students) of the Education Consolidation and Improvement Act of 1981 in St. Landry parish.

Napoleonville, a town in Assumption Parish whose population is almost 50 percent black, has elected two black firsts: LAWRENCE "SAM" WILLIAMS as mayor and WILLIE BLANCHARD as chief of police. Williams has served as a deputy for the town and presently works as a school bus driver. Blanchard is currently a deputy.

MISSISSIPPI: This state will hold its elections for governor, other state-wide offices, and state legislative seats this year. **County Supervisor BENNIE THOMPSON (Hinds County) reports that Mississippi's black political leaders have formed an ad-hoc group, "Agenda '87," to increase black influence in elections and governance in the state this year.** Agenda '87 plans to draw up a policy agenda, evaluate candidates running for office in the state, and target state legislative districts for the election of black officials. **Currently, Mississippi has 10 majority black senate districts but only two black state senators.** In another 12 state senatorial districts blacks compose more than 30 percent of the voting-age population. **In the state's house of representatives, too, blacks are underrepresented:** 25 members represent majority black districts and an additional 30 districts have voting-age populations that are 30 percent or more black—but Mississippi has only 18 black state representatives. Winning a greater share of these districts is one of Agenda '87's major goals.

NORTH CAROLINA: NAACP field director CAROLYN COLEMAN says this state leads the country in the number of lawsuits seeking to replace at-large elections, which she says dilute black voting strength, with district elections. The NAACP filed seven voting rights suits in North Carolina in 1986. Statewide, the pressure is on local officials to institute district elections. Coleman says the NAACP has picked targets for suits by looking at an area's black population, its number of elected black officials, and the community's willingness to pursue the suits. Although the NAACP's 1987 priority will be economic development, it has vowed to continue its voting rights actions.

OHIO: ROBERT FORT, president of a newly formed black political group in Youngstown called The Black Citizens Coalition, has announced that he is running for mayor in the city's May primary. Fort must run against incumbent Mayor PATRICK J. UNGARO in the Democratic primary in his bid to become the city's first black mayor. However, the Black Citizens Coalition is a splinter group of the Youngstown chapter of the Black Elected Democrats of Ohio, and Youngstown's black leadership remains split. **Whether Fort has a real chance of winning will largely depend on whether black voters of this 50 percent black city can unite behind him.**

'86 Tax Reform May Hurt Minority Firms

Changes Still Possible

by Margaret C. Simms

Tax reform or "tax simplification" was achieved in 1986 by lowering individual and corporate rates and eliminating or phasing out several tax credits and deductions. What impact will these changes have on minority businesses? The question was addressed at a JCPS roundtable of experts on minority business.

The purpose of the roundtable was to analyze the Tax Reform Act of 1986 and to provide comments to the Treasury Department, which is in the process of writing regulations for the new law. The meeting was hosted by the Joint Center at the request of the research division of the Minority Business Development Agency, Department of Commerce.

The main conclusion of the panel of experts was that minority businesses would be adversely affected by the changes in the deductibility provisions of the new law. Most of the changes would have the effect of reducing cash flow in firms where working capital is already very low, which would be especially detrimental for new starts and for firms that are trying to expand.

Individual Tax Returns

Nearly all black and Hispanic businesses report their income on an individual tax return, because they are individual proprietorships or partnerships (98 percent) or corporations under Subchapter S. Therefore the changes in the law that affect individuals are important.

Limits on deducting interest. Minority entrepreneurs often must use their personal credit or personal equity to finance loans for business purposes. Interest on these loans may not be deductible because of the difficulty of proving that a personal loan had a business purpose.

Limits on business expenses. Expenses for activities that benefit the business, like tax advice and membership in professional organizations, cannot be written off personal income to the same extent as before. This raises the out-of-pocket costs to entrepreneurs.

Decreases in cash flow. The elimination of income averaging and the increase in estimated tax payments (individuals must now pay 90 percent instead of 80 percent of estimated liability quarterly) will require businesses to pay more to the government sooner. Many provisions also require more record-keeping and more detailed tax advice—both of which are expenses that minority firms are not likely to find within their budgets.

"Emerging" Firms

Black businesses have traditionally been in the retail and personal service areas. However, some are "emerging" firms in non-traditional industries such as manufacturing and wholesale. Though these firms are small in number, they are important because they may offer the best prospects for expansion. (See Robert Suggs, "Black Businesses in Transition," *Focus,* June-July 1986.) The new tax law, though it includes lower corporate tax rates, includes other provisions that will have a detrimental impact on these businesses.

Because the emerging firms in the manufacturing and wholesaling industries are likely to be capital-intensive or to have large inventories, two changes will be most harmful: the elimination of the investment tax credit and the increase in the number of years for depreciating capital investments (and some indirect costs like pensions and warehousing). The impact of these changes will be to increase the costs of capital and to reduce cash flow.

Suggested Changes

The experts' recommendations fell into two categories. First, on issues that Congress had left to the discretion of the Internal Revenue Service, the panel suggested "liberal" interpretations in the proposed regulations, e.g., a limit on the categories of costs subject to the uniform cost capitalization rules. The panel also suggested that loan interest be deductible if a reasonable connection can be made between the use of the funds and the business.

Second, the panel suggested changes for Congress to consider when enacting technical amendments—which Congress will probably do later this year. The main proposed changes are to reinstitute the investment tax credit for small businesses and to exempt some small or new firms from the most detrimental changes.

The panel concluded with a strong affirmation of the need for continuing minority involvement in present and future tax reform efforts. This task is particularly crucial because, as one panelist noted, there was absolutely no minority involvement in the congressional rush to reform the tax code in 1986. While minority businesses were no doubt harmed by the 1986 tax reforms, there still is time for corrective action in 1987 as the IRS develops its regulations and Congress considers technical amendments. ■

Dr. Simms is deputy director of research at JCPS.

Risk of AIDS Is Spreading

Disease Control Tied to Behavior Changes

by Jacqueline Bowles

During the period June 1, 1981, to December 8, 1986, 28,098 AIDS cases in the United States were reported to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC). Approximately 25 percent of these AIDS patients were black—though blacks are only 12 percent of the nation's population.

The number of reported cases continues to rise among all ethnic and racial groups. The Surgeon General's Report on AIDS estimates that 270,000 AIDS cases will be reported by 1991—just four years away. If preventive steps are not taken, and if the percentage of blacks affected by AIDS remains constant, it is projected that 67,000 blacks will have contracted AIDS by the year 1991.

Despite these staggering figures, many blacks deny that AIDS is a problem that threatens them. In reality, of course, the AIDS epidemic threatens everyone who engages in high risk behavior, but it poses special problems for blacks because of the distinct way it is transmitted within the black community.

High-Risk Groups

The CDC data identified some key racial differences in the patterns of AIDS virus transmission. Among homosexual and bisexual men, 16 percent were black and 73 percent were white. Among heterosexuals, though, 50 percent were black, 25 percent were white, and 25 percent were Hispanic or other. As these numbers indicate, black heterosexuals are at greater *relative* risk for exposure to AIDS than white heterosexuals. This leads to the next startling statistic, the distribution of AIDS among women and children: blacks accounted for 51 percent of all women with AIDS and 58 percent of all children with AIDS.

What factors are associated with the greater relative incidence of AIDS among black heterosexuals? Two factors are suggested by the data. First, more than 50 percent of the non-homosexual AIDS patients with a history of intravenous (IV) drug abuse were black (while 30 percent were Hispanic and 19 percent were white). While these AIDS patients may have contracted the disease through the sharing of needles or other means, they can pass it on through sexual activity with heterosexual partners.

Second, it has been observed that black male homosexuals are more likely than white male homosexuals to engage in sexual activities with members of the opposite sex—i.e., to be bisexual.

A recent study of homosexual and bisexual AIDS patients in the *New England Journal of Medicine*, for instance, noted that 30 percent of the blacks in this group but only 12 percent of the whites were bisexual. Press reports have noted that one reason for the difference may be that it is more difficult for black male homosexuals to disclose their sexual preference because the black community attaches a strong stigma to homosexuality. Thus, there is pressure on black male homosexuals to have a bisexual lifestyle.

Education and Prevention

The spread of AIDS can be controlled if people receive accurate information about its risks and if they take the necessary precautions. Education and prevention efforts aimed at the white gay community, for instance, have showed measurable success. However, there has not been a comparable effort at developing AIDS education programs that are targeted at the black community

A major deterrent to AIDS education and prevention in the black community—as emphasized by participants at a national conference on "AIDS in the Black Community," which was sponsored by the National Coalition of Black Lesbians and Gays—is the stigma associated with the disease. As noted in an *Ebony* feature on

AIDS in Africa

Dr. Beny Prim, executive director of the Addiction Research and Treatment Corporation in Brooklyn, New York, is a leading authority on substance abuse and AIDS. He urges that black Americans pay attention to the devastating impact of AIDS in Africa. According to a recent *Newsweek* article, the World Health Organization conservatively estimates that 50,000 Africans in 11 nations have died from AIDS since the late 1970s. Leading AIDS scientists report that the death toll in Africa is probably substantially higher and that 5 million Africans may be infected with the virus. In Africa AIDS is spread predominantly through heterosexual contact or from mother to infant. Re-use of contaminated needles in a medical context and receiving unscreened contaminated blood also play a significant role in AIDS transmission in Africa. Dr. Prim fears that if black Americans do not acknowledge the AIDS threat and adopt preventive measures, black America may experience an epidemic similar to the epidemic that black Africans face today.

Dr. Bowles, a physician, is the Senior Scientific Advisor in the Office of Minority Health, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

AIDS patients, some blacks may delay seeking treatment because they fear rejection and abandonment by their families and friends. As *Ebony* also noted, the stigma associated with AIDS has prevented the mobilization of support groups for AIDS patients and their families.

Developing AIDS prevention strategies for IV drug abusers has also been a significant problem. There is controversy about whether to provide IV drug abusers with free sterile needles and syringes, or with information about cleaning needles and syringes, in an attempt to impede the spread of AIDS in this high-risk group. Associations such as the Health Education Resource Organization (HERO) in Baltimore, Maryland, and the Whitman-Walker Clinic, Inc., in Washington, D.C., train selected clients from local drug abuse projects to function as outreach workers disseminating AIDS prevention information to IV drug abusers and others who are at high risk for exposure to AIDS within the community. There is also a need for specialized AIDS education and prevention programs for black prostitutes, prisoners, and the families of blacks who are at high risk for AIDS exposure.

AIDS preventive education that is applicable to everyone includes teaching "safe" sexual practices, such as using a condom, limiting the number of sexual partners, avoiding sex with prostitutes, and avoiding "casual" sex. AIDS prevention also includes avoiding other high-risk behavior such as IV drug abuse. It is particularly important that such education begin at early ages, before sexual activity begins. ■

AIDS Fact Sheet

AIDS is an abbreviation for Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome. This syndrome is caused by a virus that destroys the body's natural defense system (immunity). The AIDS virus has been given several names by scientists—HTLV-III (Human T-Lymphotropic Virus Type III), LAV (Lymphadenopathy Associated Virus), and HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus). The virus invades the bloodstream and primarily attacks a certain class of white cell, the T lymphocyte. When T-lymphocytes do not function properly the immune system is impaired and the body becomes susceptible to uncommon, potentially lethal infections and cancers. These diseases are caused by bacteria, protozoa, fungi, other viruses and malignancies that are called "opportunistic" because they take advantage of the infected individual's lowered resistance and cause life-threatening illness.

Currently, it is thought that not everyone who is infected with the AIDS virus will become ill. The interval between infection with the virus and the presence of symptoms in those who become sick ranges from several months to five years or more. The infected person may remain healthy, but unless precautions are taken, he/she may be able to spread the virus to others. The infected person may develop AIDS Related Complex (ARC), which can also be a serious form of the disease. It is currently estimated that 20-30 percent of individuals infected with the AIDS virus for five years or longer will develop "classic" AIDS. The characteristic features of AIDS include opportunistic infections (such as *Pneumocystis carinii* pneumonia), cancer (such as Kaposi's sarcoma), and nervous system disease. Infection is the most common cause of death in AIDS.

The AIDS virus has been identified in several body fluids including blood, semen, and vaginal secretions. The virus is spread predominantly through sexual contact and by sharing intravenous needles and syringes. During sexual intercourse the virus (in semen or vaginal secretions) may invade the bloodstream through the vagina, rectum, or penis. Needles and syringes contaminated with blood from an infected person will transmit the virus into the bloodstream of the next user. The AIDS virus can also be transmitted from an infected pregnant woman across the placenta to her child in the womb or during delivery.

In the past, the AIDS virus was also spread to some people who received transfusion of blood or blood factors (such as hemophiliacs who require blood factors to clot their blood). Since March 1985, blood banks have used a test to detect antibodies to the AIDS virus. Antibodies are produced by the body 2-12 weeks following exposure to the virus. Although there is a very small risk that a newly infected person would not have the antibody present, it is anticipated that the use of this test to screen blood donors and the rejection of donors from known high-risk groups will virtually eliminate the future transmission of AIDS through blood or blood products. Unfortunately, people who received blood or blood products before March 1985 remain at a slight risk for developing AIDS.

It is important to note that AIDS is not transmitted by casual social contact such as shaking hands, hugging, social kissing, crying, coughing, or sneezing. AIDS has not been contracted by sharing linens, towels, or eating utensils.

The people who are at highest risk for exposure to AIDS are homosexual and bisexual men, and intravenous (IV) drug abusers. Sexual partners of people in these high-risk groups are also at risk for infection. Having numerous sexual partners, male or female, will increase one's risk of exposure to the AIDS virus. The developing infant of a pregnant woman who carries the virus is also at risk.

TELESCOPE

JCPS' 10TH ANNUAL DINNER SET FOR APRIL 8, 1987

Richard M. Morrow, chairman and chief executive officer of Amoco Corporation, will be the National Dinner Chairman, and Congressman Bill Gray (D-Pa.), chairman of the Budget Committee of the U.S. House of Representatives, will head the General Dinner Committee at the 10th annual dinner of the Joint Center for Political Studies. The event will be held on April 8, 1987, at the Sheraton Washington Hotel, Washington D.C.

Tickets for the annual dinner are priced at $250 for individuals, $2500 for patron's tables, and $5000 for sponsor's tables. To make reservations, please call: (202) 626-3555. ■

COMPLETING BOOK IS GOAL OF JCPS' 1987 DISTINGUISHED SCHOLAR

Duke University law professor Jerome Culp has taken residence at the Joint Center as a Distinguished Scholar to work on a book which will develop a legal and economic framework for assessing black economic progress. "Past efforts to develop such a framework have not had the right mix of scholarship and empiricism," he said. Though Professor Culp will focus on issues arising under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, he is also interested in analyzing other federal programs, e.g., minority business "set-asides" and the programs of the Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs, which are aimed at advancing black economic interests. The book is titled, *Rights Due Respect: The Law and Economics of Affirmative Action.*

Professor Culp is the author of numerous articles in law reviews and economic journals. He has been an associate professor at Duke University since 1985, and has also taught at Rutgers Law School and the University of Maryland (in the economics department). He has received a B.A. degree from the University of Chicago, an M.A. degree from Harvard University, and his law degree from Harvard Law School.

Established under a three-year grant from the MacArthur Foundation, the JCPS Distinguished Scholars Program enables outstanding scholars to spend up to one year in residence at the Joint Center conducting research. Eligible persons must have a record of substantial publication and distinguished work in their field. ■

NPI CO-SPONSORS PANELS FOR SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS

The National Caucus of Black School Board Members (NCBSBM) and the Joint Center for Political Studies' National Policy Institute are co-sponsoring a set of workshops for black school board members at the National School Boards Association's Annual Meeting in San Francisco, California, April 4-6, 1987. The workshops will focus on issues of particular interest to black policymakers: education reform in urban and rural schools, and high school dropout prevention. Experts from a number of organizations, including the Joint Center, the Education Commission of the States, the Hispanic Policy Development Project, the Children's Defense Fund, the Southern Education Foundation, and the Institute for Educational Leadership have been invited to participate as presenters and panelists.

For more information on the conference, contact Adria Thomas, the National School Boards Association, at (703) 838-6722. Specific questions on the workshops should be addressed to Denise Alston or Russell Owens, both on the staff of JCPS, at (202) 626-3500. ■

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